

First West Nile Virus 2004 Activity Confirmed in Kansas; Positive WNV Bird Found in Sedgwick County

The Kansas Department of Health and Environment confirmed the presence of West Nile Virus (WNV) in a bird in Sedgwick County on June 26. This is the first confirmed WNV activity in 2004.



WNV is carried by birds and transmitted by mosquitoes that bite the infected birds, which then transmit it to horses and people.

"Every Kansan should take precautions against West Nile Virus because we know the virus is in the state and will be here throughout the summer," says Gail Hansen, Acting State Epidemiologist. "While some people are more at risk than others, we have no way of knowing how our body will respond to WNV, and for some individuals it can be an extremely difficult illness, with long-lasting side effects, and in rare cases can lead to death."

Hansen urges Kansans to focus on protecting themselves by being prepared, not scared of the virus. The best way to be prepared includes personal precautions such as use of an insect repellent with DEET, and reducing mosquito breeding grounds. She urges Kansans not to wait for the virus to be reported in their county to take action.

"We cannot wait until the virus is found in the area where we live before taking precautions against WNV," Hansen adds. "We must act responsibly and protect ourselves and our families every day through simple actions that reduce our likelihood of getting bitten by a mosquito and reduce mosquito breeding grounds."

There have been no human cases reported to KDHE this season, either through the state laboratory or through positive lab results from private laboratories in the state. KDHE reminds physicians to report West Nile Virus (WNV) cases with neuro-invasive disease to the state. Physicians may call KDHE's Epidemiology hotline to report cases of West Nile Virus or suspect cases at 1-877-427-7317.

KDHE recommends the following to reduce the risk of WNV:

- Use insect repellent with DEET and wear protective clothing when practical
- Remove standing water (where mosquitoes breed)
- Use larvicide in water that cannot be drained or removed
- Change water frequently in bird baths, pet bowls, and wading pools and
- Limit outdoor activities at dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are most active

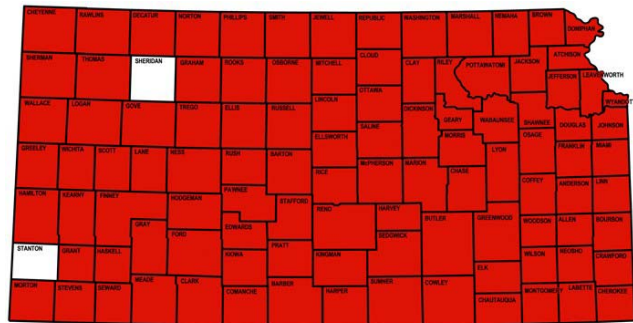
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KDHE is asking Kansans to report dead birds to the state by calling the **West Nile Virus Information Line** at **1-877-228-2287**. Birds being tested include: crows, blue jays, magpies, or birds of prey (hawks, owls, eagles), and must meet the following criteria for testing:

- Bird should not have been dead longer than 24 hours;
- Bird should be intact and should be placed in double plastic bag in freezer until submitted.

Callers will be given directions to their local Kansas State University Extension agent for drop-off of the bird. K-State Extension agents will then ship the specimens to a designated testing lab. Test results will not be released to individuals submitting birds, but birds testing positive will be reported on the WNV Web site.

In 2003, 90 human WNV cases with neurological illness were confirmed through the KDHE Division of Health and Environment Laboratories (DHEL). Of these 90 cases, 7 deaths were confirmed WNV cases. In addition, private labs confirmed 731 human WNV test results. Three additional deaths were attributed to WNV, but unconfirmed through lab work.



West Nile Virus activity has spread across virtually all of Kansas since 2002. (Source: KDHE)

In 2002, 22 WNV human cases with neurological illness were confirmed through the DHEL and no deaths reported.

For more information on West Nile Virus, go to www.westnileks.com.